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## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### *Virginia War Orphan Education Program Renamed and Expanded*

RICHMOND—New legislation passed by the 2006 General Assembly renamed the Virginia War Orphan Education Program to the Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program. The legislation also expands eligibility for educational benefits to spouses.

Under the new legislation a spouse or child, between the ages of 16 and 29, of a military service member killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or at least 90 percent disabled may be eligible for education benefits. These benefits may include full payment of tuition, fees, room and board, and books at any state-supported college or university in Virginia. Previously, these benefits were not available to spouses, and eligibility capped at 25 years of age.

“We have more than 850 children of military service members who are taking advantage of this program and who are currently enrolled in state-supported colleges and universities around Virginia,” stated Vince Burgess, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS). “This new legislation acknowledges the value that Virginia places on the men and women who serve in the military. It ensures that the educational needs of their families will be taken care of should something happen to the service member during a military operation.”

The veteran must have been a Virginia citizen at the time he or she entered the military or must have been a Virginia citizen for at least five years prior to the surviving dependent’s application for admission. The surviving spouse may also satisfy residency requirements if he or she lived in Virginia for at least five years prior to marrying the service member or has been a citizen of Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to the date of application.

Eligibility will usually be determined using documentation from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. However, the veteran or surviving spouse may be asked to provide documentation verifying residency, the applicant's age or relationship.

Additional information about the program and eligibility requirements is available at the DVS website, [www.dvs.virginia.gov](http://www.dvs.virginia.gov).

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